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ABSTRACT

Three papers address the question of why the field of curriculum alternates between periods of creative change and periods of relative inertia. Key historical influences are discussed and related to the present state of the field. Ralph W. Tyler's paper "What the curriculum field needs to learn from its history" deals with the cyclical behavior of criticism, reform, and retrenchment. He believes that a systematic historical study of curriculum leadership as shown in curriculum development would be beneficial. Arthur Wirth, in "What we can learn from a Deweyan perspective", discusses the conflict between a demand for technocratic efficiency and the need to consider democratic values concerning the quality of life. He points out how misinterpretations of Dewey have hindered access to the Deweyan tradition. "Learning from the curricular past", Leonard Berk's paper, uses a case history of Gary, Indiana schools from 1940-1968 to illustrate how the two opposing interpretations of curricular development, capricious and intractable, occur under various social and economic influences. He suggests that useful curriculum history requires an analysis of the interaction of leading ideas with school practice. (CK)

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WHAT THE CURRICULUM FIELD NEEDS TO LEARN FROM ITS HISTORY

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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	
Daniel Tanner	1
WHAT THE CURRICULUM FIELD NEEDS TO LEARN FROM ITS HISTORY	
Ralph W. Tyler	4
WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM A DEWEYAN PERSPECTIVE	
Arthur G. Wirth	11
LEARNING FROM THE CURRICULAR PAST	
Leonard Berk	21

INTRODUCTION

Daniel Tanner

Why has the curriculum field at various times during the twentieth century been marked by vital and creative changes, whereas at other times it has been characterized as suffering from relative inertia, retrenchment, and reaction?

In addressing this question the members of the symposium sought to identify and assess some of the key historical movements and influences as related to the present-day situation of the curriculum field. The following concerns were examined by the participants: (1) the condition of ahistoricism which appears to prevail in the curriculum field; (2) the cyclical phenomenon in which innovative ideas are generated and implemented in given eras only to be discarded and eventually regenerated in a subsequent era without cognizance of the historical experience with such innovations; (3) the failure of the curriculum field to build on its body of research findings; (4) the tendency for curriculum innovations to be developed, implemented, and promoted without a substantive research base; (5) the shifting sociopolitical conditions which exert marked influences on curriculum theory, development, and practice; (6) the tendency of various eras of curriculum reform to be marshalled as a reaction to the excesses of the preceding era of reform; and (7) the misinterpretation and

distortion of educational thought, particularly in connection with the experimentalist "movement" and the ideas of John Dewey.

Ralph Tyler's paper focuses on the problem of the cyclical phenomenon of criticism, reform, and retrenchment in the curriculum field. Professor Tyler uses five examples of recurrent problems and issues in the curriculum field and points to the need to study these problems from a historical vantage point with a view toward gaining insights and answers. Finally he calls for the systematic historical study of curriculum leadership as evidenced in curriculum development, so that knowledge might be gained in determining how external social pressures might be transformed into constructive leadership for curriculum development.

Arthur Wirth examines the problem from a Deweyan perspective. Here he shows how the misinterpretations of Dewey have served to deny educators access to the Deweyan tradition -- an access that might be helpful in constructively attacking present-day problems in the curriculum field. Professor Wirth addresses the cultural split between the demand for technocratic efficiency and the democratic traditions centered on the quality of life. In relation to the latter, he warns against the recurrent tendency to misidentify the Deweyan tradition with romantic freedom. Wirth sees the issues connected with this cultural split as continually resurfacing within both the social and educational arenas for the remainder of this century. Efforts to impose the technocratic--efficiency ideology on the schools will not go unchallenged as long as the democratic tradition is taken seriously in both our

economic and educational institutions, Wirth contends.

Leonard Berk examines two seemingly contradictory interpretations of how curriculum development is characterized. On the one hand, it is seen as moving capriciously, responding to changing fads and swinging like a pendulum. On the other hand, it is interpreted as being intractable, resisting change and conforming to custom. Drawing from a case history, Berk shows how each interpretation presents only a partial picture of reality, and that both elements are operating under various social and economic influences.

Dr. Berk points out that our existing approach to the historical study of the curriculum field helps to nurture the collective identy of the field, but because it has failed to relate educational ideas with school practice it tends toward a mixture of myth and fact. Drawing from Kuhn's analysis of the field of science, Berk acknowledges that such history serves a valuable pedagogic purpose in inducting neophytes to the traditions of a field. But he maintains that a really useful history for advancing curriculum knowledge and practice will require analysis of the interaction of leading ideas with school practice.

WHAT THE CURRICULUM FIELD NEEDS TO LEARN FROM ITS HISTORY

Ralph W. Tyler

I am not an historian. My response to the question posed in this symposium is based on my own limited experience and my judgment of the current curriculum problems and issues that appear to have arisen at other times. I have chosen five of them as examples.

A year or two ago, curriculum leaders were perplexed; some were even astounded, at the insistent emphasis of the press, in public meetings and in legislative halls, on the admonition to the schools: "Back to basics." This came at a time when many curriculum developers were proposing new courses of study--ecology, global energy, values clarification, multicultural understanding, world perspective. They proposed to broaden the curriculum rather than to narrow it.

In spite of evidence from the national assessment that 9 year olds and 17 year olds were doing better in reading than in previous assessments and more than 90 percent of 17 year olds could add, subtract, multiply, and divide accurately with whole numbers, the public appeared to accept without question sweeping generalizations that the schools were failing, student achievement was dropping and schools must concentrate their efforts on reading and arithmetic. Curriculum leaders were unprepared to deal effectively with this shift in emphasis.

There has been at least one other time in the history of American education when similar public reactions have occurred. I remember the mid-1930s, in the depths of the Great Depression, when a national

conference on the crisis in education was held in Columbus, Ohio. This conference urged the schools to focus their main efforts on the "Three R's" and on character development. Part of the high level of youth unemployment at that time was attributed to the lack of basic skills of youth. Senator Royal S. Copeland of New York was then chairing a senate committee investigating crime and racketeering. The committee reached the conclusion that the way to reduce crime was for the schools to give serious attention to character education.

It seems likely to me that there have been several other periods in which the public has urged the schools to get "back to basics."

Surely we can learn from historical studies of these occasions about the climate of opinion in which these pressures develop, about the attempts made, or not made, by educational leaders to get the relevant facts before the public, and to get better public understanding of the curriculum and the rationale for its offerings. Do these reactions usually accompany rapid social changes? Are they related to the acceptance, tacit or explicit, of new educational aspirations? During these periods are other social institutions--family, church, medical, and legal institutions also under attack? How were these pressures resolved? Answers to questions of this sort should give us a better understanding of these cycles in which public pressure is placed on the schools to return to the curriculum of an earlier day. This might enable curriculum developers to anticipate these occasions and react constructively in curriculum planning.

The current wave of legislation on educational accountability has influenced many schools not only to narrow their curriculum offerings but also to fragment their educational objectives into miniscule, isolated bits of learning, and to evaluate student progress using tests that appraise only a part of what the schools seek to teach. This situation also seems to me to be one that has occurred in earlier periods, although the standards of accountability have probably been different. Shortly after the First World War, the schools were attacked for their lack of strict discipline. School boards in Nebraska, where I lived at that time, passed regulations regarding student behavior and held both principals and teachers accountable for the enforcement of these regulations. Board members visited schools and in our community, two teachers were dismissed for their laxity in maintaining proper decorum.

At an earlier time in Nebraska, the public and boards of education were concerned about the adequacy of the teachers' knowledge of the subjects they were teaching. Periodically, they were called before the school board and given oral quizzes, mostly on facts of arithmetic, geography and American history, and the spelling of rather unusual words.

All social institutions are generally held accountable for their performance but, in the case of the schools, the accountability system seems to vary from time to time in terms of what they are held to be accountable for, and in the degree of enforcement of their accountability.

Historical studies should help us gain perspective and furnish a sounder basis for seeking public consensus on the objectives of the curriculum, the appropriateness of learning experiences, the influence

on learning of positive reinforcement and the like. In these earlier periods of emphasis upon accountability, what were the public conceptions of the school's responsibility? What were the accepted views of the appropriate indices of school operations? How did the schools respond to these changing expectations of acceptable performance? Answers to such questions should enable school personnel to initiate dialogues with parents and laymen that would help to build a sounder basis of public support for an appropriate educational program, including particularly the curriculum.

A third example is provided by the periodic efforts that I have observed of curriculum developers seeking to introduce new subjects into the public school curriculum. Usually these efforts were unsuccessful in spite of persuasive arguments as to the value of the new subjects. Yet, within the past century, science was introduced and became established as a major subject in the high school curriculum. It has not yet become fully established in the elementary school. Social studies was introduced in the 1920's and is quite firmly established. Driver education, introduced about 50 years ago into the high school program is now widely accepted.

During the past century, several subjects have been dropped from the curriculum of most high schools. Greek is very rarely taught, Latin occupies a much smaller niche, geography as a separate subject exists in a minority of schools. I believe that curriculum planners could profitably learn from investigations of these subjects.

What were the influences that brought some new subjects into the curriculum and forced some older ones out? Are the forces largely

within the teaching profession? The university faculties? Organizations of business, industry, agriculture? Parents' associations? Others? What kinds of arguments have been most persuasive?

Curriculum developers rarely refer to these previous experiences in deciding whether to propose a new subject, units within existing subjects, or nothing at all. Surely knowledge of the dynamic factors involved in earlier curriculum changes would be helpful.

Even more helpful to us in our present efforts to develop curricula to meet the needs of children and youth not now learning what the schools and colleges seek to teach would be the history of the curricular and instructional innovations, which were successful in establishing the academies in place of the Latin grammar schools, the public high schools in place of the academies and, in general, the developments that enabled our high schools to help an increasingly wide range of students. What unmet needs were identified, and by whom? What conceptions of subject matter and of learning were developed to correspond to the identification of assets and needs of the "new students"? How were the courses designed and taught? What means were used to cull out unsuccessful efforts? From what sources were leaders for these efforts recruited?

At the level of post-secondary education, we could learn much of value in curriculum and instructional development by intensive studies of two great American institutional innovations: the Land Grant Colleges, and the Junior Colleges. The Land Grant Colleges served a very major need in providing post-secondary education to the "agricultural and mechanical classes." The development of effective curricula and instructional practices took a long time to mature--1870 to 1910. The Junior

College, originated in Illinois and widely established in California by 1930, made a very important contribution in the post-secondary education of youth from working class families, as well as those from the middle class with modest incomes.

The faculties of both these institutions appeared to recognize the different educational goals and the different learning problems of their clientele in contrast to the successful students in traditional institutions of higher education, and they also recognized the powerful assets of these "new students." How did they proceed to develop curricula? What obstacles were encountered? What principles guided those who were successful in curriculum development? These and other questions need to be answered, if we are to benefit from the remarkably successful experiences in developing these pioneer institutions.

Finally, I suggest that we could benefit greatly from studies of curriculum leadership as evidenced in curriculum development over the past two or three centuries. It is conventional wisdom that significant changes in the curriculum have been developed as responses to demands and opportunities arising outside of the school, imbedded in the great changes in society. But we know little about the persons who are able to translate external pressures into constructive responses. It seems likely that most of us in the schools will respond to pressures, either by resistance or by acceptance, rather than by translating the pressures into forces supporting far-sighted educational improvements. I believe we can learn a great deal that would be helpful at this time, if we had much more knowledge of past experiences in the development of constructive leadership

for curriculum development. We certainly are in the midst of great social changes. We are certainly experiencing external pressures for curriculum and instructional change. Can we learn how to respond in a constructive way to rebuild or reform, that is, to develop educational institutions and programs tuned to present and future needs and opportunities?

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM A DEWEYAN PERSPECTIVE

Arthur Wirth

It is no secret that we have had a love/hate relation with the Deweyan part of our tradition. By reflecting on this phenomenon we may see something about American life which explains in part the bitterness of the debate over school programs - a bitterness I believe we can expect to continue.

Daniel Bell has pointed to an underlying division in the society which gets reflected in debates over school policy. Bell says that there is a widening tension between the values of our economic, technical order which is oriented to functional rationality and organized on the principle of economizing - of least costs and optimization of production and profits, and a counter set of values concerned with wholeness of persons.[1] (Bell sees hedonism in the latter while I see it more as a reflection of the democratic insistence on treating persons as ends.)

This tension may sharpen as we approach decisions about social reconstruction involving shifts from preoccupations with quantitative growth to qualitative goals. If so, the real task will be, not to choose between wholeness vs. technocratic rationality, but to search for divergent solutions which bring together our best capacities for inquiry and intellectuality with the concerns of our democratic traditions for the quality of life. In this case Dewey, read correctly, I believe, might again have relevance for social and educational planning.

Two points of comment:

(1) The Deweyan tradition won't be of value if interpreted once again as a romantic educational freedom.

(2) It contains an image of learning and teaching at odds with another 20th century American innovation: The effort to subsume school learning under business efficiency ideology.

Can we learn anything from our previous affairs with Dewey? One thing is clear, when we permit Dewey to be interpreted as nothing but a romantic aberrant we deny ourselves access to a part of our past which might be helpful. The next time we lurch away from educational system building as dehumanizing, it would be nice if we could avoid a dismal re-run of Dewey cast as an apostle for a new round of "freedom for children".

We could insist on getting to the fore some of his own reminders on that point: a classic one being his 1902 statement in The Child and the Curriculum, that the history of education reveals two educational sects - the one with the slogans of "the child and freedom" on its banner, the other marching under the flag of "subject matter and discipline". His conclusion being that this long-standing division points to the dilemma that legitimate values are represented in both camps. Dewey's view of the fundamental nature of education requires that he attach importance to both: He defines education as a matter of helping learners to reconstruct experience so they will see their world or themselves with new meanings. Learning is primarily a meaning -seeking affair. The studies, therefore, require careful respect because they

contain meanings we need that have grown out of human inquiry. In How We Think (1910) Dewey said that the teacher had to be steeped in his subject: "Unless he has mastered the subject matter . . . and is thoroughly at home in it he will not be able to attend to the pupils' intellectual reactions"[2] and to open new insights to them. In "Progressive Education and the Science of Education" (1927) he said that the teacher as the person with "the riper and fuller experience and the greater insight into the possibilities of continuous development found in any project, has not only the right but the duty to suggest lines of (educative) activity."[3]

On the other hand he emphasized, over and over, that the locus of reconstructing experience was always in the life of the individual learner. This led him to assert in Democracy and Education that, "How one person's abilities compare in quantity with those of another is none of the teacher's business. It is irrelevant to his work. What is required is that every individual shall have opportunities to employ his own powers in activities that have meaning."[4]

This part of our tradition then tells us, contrary to the educational romantics, that we are in trouble whenever we fail to win kids to the life of the mind through engagement with the intellectual power of the disciplines; but we are in trouble, too, when we get lost in complicated measurement games instead of helping each kid to find his own power to learn - to get in touch with his unique arete' or excellence.

It is true, however, that people turning to Dewey have been confounded by his vagueness about curriculum. (John Childs once said that when Dewey approached the curriculum question in Experience and Education,

"He marched right up the hill and then right down again.") We might note that on occasion Dewey did urge teachers of progressive persuasion to accept "the necessity of finding projects which involve an orderly development and inter-connection of subject matter", and that they should work out, for trial and criticism, definite and organized bodies of knowledge.

I think this very way of putting it may shed light on "the curriculum vagueness" problem. It is rooted in a conception of the fundamental image of the teacher that is in marked contrast to the role of the teacher in the efficiency model.

In The Sources of a Science of Education, (1929)[5] Dewey said that the function of the scientific planning of education was not to supply teachers with fixed objectives or ready-made rules but to provide whatever "enables the educator, whether administrator or teacher, to see and to think more clearly and deeply about whatever he is doing." "Education", he insisted, "is a mode of life and action" - not an anti-septic delivery system. From this viewpoint there is no way to get kids to experience education as a meaning seeking way of life unless the teacher is experiencing that himself. There is no way you can combine this concept of education with teacher-proof packages - nor with equating teacher efficiency with student performance on standardized test scores.

In both teacher student relations and collegial relations it requires open communication and treating ideas about teaching as working hypotheses. If learning is to be inquiring for students, then teachers need freedom to be inquirers into the processes of their own work.

It will help to be candid about several consequences that follow from this conception:

(1) It is a lot more complex than romantic freedom. (We may note that there was curriculum design in Dewey's Lab School with a historical emphasis on the study of critical change points in the evolution of human experience - including, for example, study of classical Greece and Rome.)

(2) It is a style that does not lend itself to mass educational engineering. Any such efforts will only pervert it. It is risky to make tries along these lines unless one is willing to create smaller learning communities, within larger systems, that assure teachers initiative and integrity.

(3) It is an educational point of view with consequences for social philosophy.

In Reconstruction In Philosophy Dewey said, "All social institutions have a meaning, a purpose. That purpose is to set free and to develop the capacities of human individuals without respect to race, sex, class or economic status."[6] The test of all political institutions and industrial arrangements is the extent to which they educate every individual into the full stature of his possibility.

Dewey was clear that his concept of inquiry-centered, collaborative learning communities ultimately made social sense only if we made serious economic changes in the direction of industrial democracy with extensive worker participation.

This brings us back to the cultural split, described by Bell, - between the drives for utilitarian, rational efficiency and wholeness of

persons. We recognize, of course, the parallel in education in the twentieth century split between progressivism and efforts to model schooling on the model of corporate, business efficiency.

C. A. Bowers pointed out recently that the current concern for efficiency is manifesting itself powerfully in a sophisticated technocratic ideology rooted in the language and world view of systems analysis, which embraces the assumptions of the conservative managerial center of society. We recognize it in behavior modification, career education, and competency based education.[7]

This tradition takes for granted the values of the corporate status quo. It sees itself as concerned with a neutral goal of improving efficiency, defined as increased measurable output. It is a rationale rooted in Comtian positivism, bureaucratically channeled through decisions by experts. It tends to assume that only observable behavior is real, that anything real must be measurable, that significant learning consists of discrete components, and that the good self is operationally defined by scoring well on expert-designed tests. The individual is posited as a component in the system. His learning experiences are measured at various stages to determine the efficiency of the delivery system. As Bowers points out, this rationale makes no reference to the individual who experiences existence as problematic and it is hard to find in it the liberal concern for education as a rational emancipatory force.

Furthermore, the specialized systems vocabulary (performance objectives, sequencing instruction, pro-active decision making, discrepancy evaluation) begins to capture the way our minds think about

education. We are subtly incorporated as supportive functionaries of the technocratic world view.

What can we foresee from this cultural split? The prospect is for continuing struggle within both the social and educational arenas. As long as the mainstream assumes that we can pursue quantitative "More" as if the supply of irreplaceable natural resources were limitless the safe bet is on the side of the technocratic expansion. The lure of viewing education as a vehicle for place and consumerist advantage is taken as a self-evident good.

I personally, however, do not accept that this version of what America is about will go unchallenged. The ecological, social and psychic costs are too heavy. We already are sharpening our awareness of critical new factors in our experience: an awareness of our planet's limited resources; an awareness that a more highly educated populace has new aspirations about life satisfactions and will not tolerate the trivialization of jobs that has pre-occupied scientific management; an awareness that urgent needs for sanity and personal growth move people to reject atomization and manipulation and to seek more integrated contact with their whole selves.

These yearnings call for a different type of rationality that breaks with the mechanistic traditions - a rationality committed to helping establish symbiotic relations with nature and committed to the reconstruction of institutions in the interests of survival and health. If, for example, a more highly educated work force presses for redesign of work along the lines of industrial democracy, current

systems analysis approaches in career education will be seen as dysfunctional.

In short, there just might be another round wherein the style of educational thought in the Deweyan tradition would deserve another look. If so, it would be a refreshing change to see it not misidentified once more with romantic freedom. An even happier prospect would be to avoid over-simplified either/or choices between our two traditions. But we also ought to face the fact that in choosing between the two we are talking about nothing less than what kinds of persons we want to become and what kind of future we want for this country.

A final note of realism. The majority of Americans, including many blue-collar workers, accept what Max Lerner called the values of a business civilization. Many endorse not only the material rewards but find personal satisfaction in the rough and tumble of the competitive corporate system. They welcome the embrace of the discipline of technocratic ideology by the schools and will resist alternative suggestions.

But we lack a general consensus; there are, in fact, deep seated doubts. Max Lerner, for example, noted how frequently civilizations have been weakened by a pathological insistence upon pushing to extremes their master institutions.[8] He thinks defensiveness about the business system may be vitiating qualities of democratic leadership "attuned at once to the life of nature and the life of the spirit". Robert Heilbroner detects "a hollowness at the center of a business civilization - a hollowness from which the pursuit of material goods

diverts our attention for a time, but that in the end insistently asserts itself".[9]

I do not need to point out to you the evidence of disaffection and psychic disarray. The clash between the disaffected and defenders of the status quo surfaced dramatically in the sixties. I believe the value issues opened then have not disappeared but will resurface as controversial issues for the rest of this century.

Dewey insisted that the alternative to rigid defensiveness of our master institution was to explore seriously the meaning of democratic values for both our economic and educational institutions. It involves exploring how more people can live with a sense of empowered participation instead of accepting the role of functionaries in a meritocratic efficiency system. The issues have barely been joined. I expect it to be lively up ahead.

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LEARNING FROM THE CURRICULAR PAST

Leonard Berk

If the question is what the curriculum field may learn from its past, then I doubt that the answer can be both simple and helpful. For the implicit problem is justifying the study of history to a field whose preoccupations are practical--the improvement of school practice in our case. Historians arguing the use of history generally have addressed this problem for decades and there is no prospect that they will lay it to rest. Surely the prospects of our doing so are no better. Yet I believe the study of the past has use for us. This, I think, is best shown by example. For that reason, my argument will be pegged to the examination of two recent studies of the curricular past.

When I speak of learning from our past, the means I have in mind are historical accounts researched and written according to the usual canons of historical scholarship. Though our concern with history has grown in the last decade, much of that concern has been expressed, perhaps inevitably, in casual history--the collection and publication of reminiscence and and memoir. These accounts are often delightful in their own right, and are frequently indispensable to research on the persons and events they treat. My concern here is not with them.

I

There are two schools of thought in the field concerning the impediments to reasonable curriculum development. One contends that the school curriculum behaves capriciously, responding to fads, swinging like a pendulum from one educational posture to its contrary and back again. The other maintains that the school curriculum behaves intractably, resisting our best attempts to improve it and conforming instead to custom and habit. As it happens these are contradictory views, yet we have entertained them concurrently for no less than eighty years. Their survival suggests that each serves to account for something real and persistent.

On the side of the capricious curriculum, one turns for testimony to the common experience of teachers, who may find that just as they are beginning to work out the kinks in one program another one has to be implemented. Those with long experience begin to notice the return of old, familiar arguments, movements, practices. Back-to-the-Basics looks like a similar movement in the 1930's. So, too, the Open Education movement seems like a return to the aspirations and practices of the Progressive Education movement. Talk of innovation eventually rings hollow. Good reasons seem to count for nothing. The arguments for change that once seemed powerful simply get shouted down in the next round of reform. Their return becomes unsettling; though still good arguments, one knows they will again be shouted down. Such experience

suggests that the curriculum is by nature capricious--fad-driven, pendular, irrational.

On the side of the intractable curriculum stands a long line of distinguished arguments from academics in the curriculum field, whose perspective on curriculum change happens to have been managerial. Some highlights: Dewey's School and Society, published in 1899, was widely read in the next two decades. Its third chapter presents the classic argument for deliberate curriculum development. There Dewey argues that the school curriculum is irrational--inefficient is his word--because it has never been thought through as a whole; it has been assembled, rather, from various schoolhouse practices of the past and now hangs together through the force of mindless tradition alone. In the Twenty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Harold Rugg invoked a variation on the same theme in his introductory essay: "Not once in a century and a half of national history has the curriculum of the school caught up with the dynamic content of American life." Again, the intractable curriculum. Thirty-some years later it was not American life in general but the changing content of science in particular that helped rationalize the curriculum development enterprise of the late 1950s and 1960s. Yet once again, when the resulting materials were examined, their performance provoked the usual melancholy observation: in practice, though we publish new texts, what gets taught is largely the old curriculum.[1] The intractability of school practice, but especially of the curriculum, is

Seymour Sarason's central concern in The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, which will probably become the most widely-read book on a curricular topic to be published in the 1970s. Thus the other face of the curriculum--perennially hide-bound, custom-ridden, irrational.

Though each view accounts plausibly for something real in the schools, their contradictory implications signal the location of a problem. It was the problem recently addressed, and I think ingeniously resolved through historical research, by Lynn McKinney and Ian Westbury. Examining the schools of Gary, Indiana, McKinney and Westbury give an account of three attempts at curriculum change in the period between 1940 and 1968.[2] I shall first summarize the story of two of these attempts, and then point out how McKinney and Westbury use them to resolve the disparity between the capricious and the intractable curriculum.

As McKinney and Westbury tell the story, the Gary schools were ripe for change by 1940. To a remarkable degree, their program had embodied the vision of one man, William Wirt. Wirt had been superintendent of schools from 1907 until his death in 1938. During his first decade in Gary he had set up one of the most celebrated experiments in American schooling, and had then maintained his plan faithfully for the succeeding two. Just three years before his death Wirt testified that he had never swerved from his original conception. Yet in those three decades Gary's population had grown tenfold, and American life had changed considerably. The schools which had begun

as a promising experiment in American education were by the time of Wirt's death as anomaly.

Having painted this backdrop, McKinney and Westbury present brief histories of three curricular initiatives--one in intercultural education, another in secondary science, and a third in vocational education--asking in each case whether the initiative actually changed the curriculum, and, if so, under what conditions.

In the case of intercultural education, the initiative clearly failed. The curriculum project, first encouraged by the board in 1943, was conceived to forestall racial strife. At first it was promoted as a sensible precaution, given the potential for conflict in Gary. Two years later, with the curriculum still in the works, that potential was realized. A series of student strikes disrupted the schools. As the board, administration, and teaching staff turned generally to restoring order, concern for the intercultural curriculum first grew and then rapidly dissipated. By the fall of 1947, the time of the last student strike, the curriculum, though written, inspired little interest. It appeared only in isolated classrooms, mainly among teachers who had taken part in its development. The board, teachers, and administrators, who had had to confront racial hostility as a problem of politics and management, no longer cared to view it as a problem of education.

In the cases of science and vocational education the initiatives succeeded, in some sense; at any rate, the school program changed. Yet neither story was quite what one might

expect. The case of the science curriculum revision will stand for both here.

The story begins in 1956, when a committee was formed in Gary to revise the secondary science curriculum. Two years later the committee issued a new curriculum guide, which the school board rapidly adopted. New science courses were to be added, special programs provided for the academically able, and the graduation requirements increased from one science course to two. The guide went on to outline each of the courses, specifying aims and suggesitng activities. But the course outlines were no more than transcriptions of the chapter topics from the recommended textbooks, and these were substantially the same in content and method as those already in use. The additional courses called for the hiring of new teachers and the equipping of laboratories, but such changes are expensive and they did not happen. So two years of curriculum work produced a new guide but no change.

By 1960, however, Gary began to feel the effects of the newly-established federal programs in support of science education. Summer workshops attracted some of Gary's science teachers who returned with experimental versions of the text materials for such programs as PSSC Physics. Federal funds for equipping laboratories became available. By 1966, PSSC and BSCS materials had become the official texts in physics and biology. But it would seem that no more than half of Gary's science teachers in 1966 felt comfortable with the new materials, notwithstanding their official adoption. By 1969

the dissenting teachers had prevailed, and the Gary schools reverted to conventional text materials.

Looking at these episodes (and at the third as well) McKinney and Westbury observe that the chief impediment to curriculum change in Gary was money. When it was not abundant, change was delayed or defeated. And in Gary money was rarely abundant. Rarely was there enough to run the old program without stinting, much less change or improve it. From here McKinney and Westbury proceed to the dispute between the capricious and the intractable curriculum. The two, they suggest, are opposite sides of the same coin, as surely they were in Gary. For the curriculum in Gary can easily be viewed both as resistant to change and as subject to trends and fashion.

The reason, of course, was that Gary could not change its curriculum, except in isolated classrooms, without sufficient resources. Because the resources available routinely were hardly sufficient even for carrying out the program on the books, change had to wait for extraordinary funds--in these cases, money from the federal government. But the availability of extraordinary funds, especially from the public purse, depends upon the climate of public opinion. And public opinion is the soul of fashion in all things. Thus Gary's program could change only when the trend of national opinion had loosened the federal purse strings. To receive the money, Gary had to want the curriculum improvements for which the funds had been designated, thus seeming to follow the fashion.

In suggesting this argument, McKinney and Westbury show how two apparently contradictory views of curriculum change--two patent half-truths--may be reconciled, thus illustrating for us one of the uses of historical research. Discussion of the school curriculum is fraught with abstract controversies, which often depend, for their continuance, on the prior acceptance of half-truths. Half-truth, in the form of theory, is the bread-and-butter of competent educational research. It is the price we must pay for generalized conclusions about social phenomena. But dependence on half-truths in such an enterprise as curriculum development, teaching, or administration is neither necessary nor desirable; it demands correction.[3] The study of past practice in its setting of circumstance helps us see through the abstract controversies of the field by specifying the respects in which their premises may be trusted.

II

In the last decade the curriculum field has spent a great deal of energy in taking stock of itself. This enterprise, above all, has called forth historical studies, some of them laudatory in tone and many of them critical. The critical ones seem to me the more valuable in principle, because criticism of the past is indispensable for locating intellectual problems. Indeed, the conventional review of the literature is precisely a critical history, though a highly stylized one.

But many of the critical histories have been weak or useless. The reason, I think, is not that the authors, as critics, do the past an injustice. It is rather that we in curriculum rarely sense the importance of getting the history right to begin with. As a result, our authors too often take deadly aim at illusory targets. In this second instance, then, I will examine what I think to be one of the best of these critical histories, but one that displays clearly the characteristic, and inevitably fatal, flaw--fatal, that is, to the utility of the criticism. Recently David Hamilton published a history of curriculum evaluation. The title of the article represents admirably its author's intent in reviewing the past: "Making Sense of Curriculum Evaluation: Continuities and Discontinuities in an Educational Idea." For this is an attempt to account for the current state of ferment in evaluation by exposing its roots in the past.[4]

Among historical studies on curricular topics, Hamilton's is outstanding in many respects. Though it draws only on published sources, it does so with erudition and accuracy. It proceeds from an explicit statement of its assumptions and a clear statement of purpose. Hamilton evidently knows a number of previous histories of the same period and territory, including the standard works by professional historians, and draws from them discerningly. These are significant virtues, I believe, and are less common in writings on curriculum history than we might wish. I cite them here as assurance that I do not intend the argument that follows as a quibble

over methodology but as a proposal to advance the state of the art.

Hamilton begins his review by stating the rationale for his taking a historical approach: "Curriculum evaluation--like every other educational activity--is guided by the accumulated experience (or inexperience) of its participants. . . ."[5] Hence, he contends, if we wish to make sense of the current state of curriculum evaluation, we should study its past. But the relevant past, he notes, is unmanageably large, so he narrows his focus to the history of what he calls the processes of research. Still, Hamilton's "processes of research" encompass a substantially larger domain than one might at first suppose. They extend far enough to include rationales for using social science to guide social life. So Hamilton looks beyond the customary bounds of methodological ideas to discuss the ethical and political doctrines of the English utilitarians.

The story begins with the philosopher John Stuart Mill, who argued the advantages of directing social administration by scientific practice. Mill's ideas when coupled with those of Francis Galton and Karl Pearson (from whose work came the psychology of individual differences) were the stimulus for a series of English studies in the nineteenth century of the effects of government assistance to the urban poor. In the United States, at the same time, the ideals of the English utilitarians appeared in the philosophy of the American pragmatists--especially John Dewey--and the ideals of the

differential psychologists in the work of E. L. Thorndike, reputedly the father of standardized achievement testing. From Thorndike and Dewey the methods and the aspirations for rational school management passed to the scientific administrators--especially Bobbitt and Charters--who made curriculum construction the instrument of rational school management. Ralph Tyler, who was expert in the methods of the psychologists and shared the interests of the scientific curriculum developers (Charters was one of his mentors) combined the two in his work on the Eight-Year Study, and thus modern curriculum evaluation was born.

Though I have left out almost all the surrounding detail, this is the essential story line of Hamilton's history. It is too simple to be true, as Hamilton himself is willing to concede. Yet the very simplicity is its point, if we are to judge by Hamilton's concluding summary:

> At the risk of underestimating the influence of counter-currents, [I have] argued that the dominant ideas of the day were translated into educational terms by John Dewey, fostered by private and state investment in education, operationalized (not always with Dewey's approval) by Thorndike, Bobbitt, and Charters, and reproduced by generations of administrators and professors who passed through the portals of Teacher College, Chicago, Stanford, and elsewhere. The ideas of the founding fathers were clearly articulated and efficiently disseminated.[6]

This story, though not entirely unfamiliar, strikes me as implausible. The reason is not that it gives short shrift to the influence of competing ideas, as Hamilton suggests, but that the course of events itself--the way the ideas pass from one eminent thinker to the next--remains obscure. (Much more so, those generations of administrators and professors, presumably all of them sycophants, clearly articulating and efficiently disseminating the doctrines of their teachers.) The actual events, at the level of experience and behavior, are entirely absent from the account.

But this is characteristic of some kinds of intellectual history and of most histories of the curriculum field. Perhaps an account of experience and behavior is unnecessary for Hamilton's purpose. This story, as he notes, is mere prelude. It lays out schematically the developing structure of beliefs about curriculum evaluation up to the mid-1950s--the structure against whose various beliefs the current practitioners of curriculum evaluation have reacted. It is these contemporary doings that Hamilton wants to make sense of, the account of earlier times being merely a means. And yet the account of the past that Hamilton provides is less history than myth.

It is, in fact, much like the mythical histories of science that Thomas Kuhn treats in his Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Such histories, he says, are the tales of incremental progress to be found in introductory science textbooks--stories of how each of the great minds of a field has made his or her contribution (as we say) to the fund of

contemporary knowledge. They are systematic distortions of the past. Indeed, Kuhn devotes a chapter to the argument that there are good pedagogic reasons for the systematic distortion that gets written into science textbooks. "From such references [to the leading figures of earlier periods] both students and professionals come to feel like participants in a long-standing historical tradition. Yet the textbook-derived tradition in which scientists come to sense their participation is one that, in fact, never existed."[7]

Identifying a tradition has, of course, been one of the chief purposes of recent histories of the field. The mythic tradition, rather than the past, is evidently David Hamilton's concern. The story he presents an erudite and persuasive rehearsal of the mythic tradition of educational measurement, coupled to a similarly persuasive account from the mythic tradition of the curriculum field. He invokes the tradition precisely so that he may reject it as a whole. For the sense he makes of the current ferment in curriculum evaluation is this: that it is the result of having to start the enterprise over again from the beginning. Within the last five years, he contends, evaluatiors discovered that the tradition has become virtually useless to them. It embodied <u>from the beginning</u> political assumptions that makes it anathema in the new age of pluralism.

Mythic history is not useless, by any means. But its uses are limited, largely, to nurturing the collective identity of a field. Because it purveys fiction as fact, mixes the two

without distinguishing them, it cannot serve the workaday function of critical history in scholarly endeavors--the assessment of what we know in an effort to decide what we ought to do next. The flaw in Hamilton's history is its acquiesence in the mythic manner. Its treatment of the past, thus, does not demonstrate how the practice of curriculum evaluation reached its present state. And Hamilton himself can do nothing with this mythic past but write it off.

In arguing the limitations of mythic history, I have had to proceed abstractly. At the moment we do not have a reliable history of curriculum evaluation. As a consequence I cannot point conveniently to an account that improves on Hamilton's. But what I can do it suggest how a reliable history is likely to differ most from one written in the mythic manner.

Instead of leaping from the doctrines of one great scholar to the next, it will inquire into the relation between doctrine and practice. I have work in progress on the development of standardized achievement testing by E. L. Thorndike and his students. It looks to me as though the familiar accounts overestimate the original contributions of the Teachers College group and underestimate the influence of nineteenth century school practice, its customs and regimens. In fact, the practice of testing student achievement to infer the effectiveness of the school program--which Hamilton attributes to a series of thinkers from Mill to Tyler--was customary in the schools of England and the United States by the mid-nineteenth century. It is older than the very social sciences in whose

name it is now justified. The question I am inclined to ask, therefore, is how the work of Thorndike and his students changed the old practice--how the customs of the schoolhouse influenced Thorndike's sense of what he and his students were doing, and how Thorndike's ideas departed from what was then customary or familiar to him from his experience with the schools.

Those who have tried to study the interaction of school practice with educational ideas will understand instantly the problems posed by such an agenda. It is difficult to get the evidence that will permit a history of such a practice as evaluation on the level of experience and behavior. Nevertheless, it seems to me that if we wish to provide more useful accounts of the curricular past, we have little choice. We can take encouragement from the fact that the necessary research poses a genuine challenge to conception and method.

Notes

1. I refer to Dewey's third chapter, "Waste in Education." The Rugg quote can be found in Harold Rugg, "Introduction," Curriculum-Making: Past and Present, Twenty-Sixth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 1927, Part 1 (Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Co., 1926), p. 3. For a thorough and persuasive examination of the efficacy of the new science materials of the 1960s, especially regarding their treatment of the concept of scientific inquiry, see Marshall D. Herron, "The Nature of Scientific Enquiry," School Review 79, No. 2 (February 1971):171-212.

2. W. Lynn McKinney and Ian Westbury, "Stability and Change: The Public Schools of Gary, Indiana, 1940-70," in Case Studies in Curriculum Change: Great Britain and the United States, edited by William A. Reid and Decker F. Walker (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975). The reader familiar with this paper will notice that I have extracted the historical study and its analysis from the larger body of speculation in the original. I have also extended McKinney and Westbury's analysis for my own purposes. The extension, however, seems to me directly implied by their analysis, and reflects no genuine originality on my part.

3. The argument here follows one advanced by Joseph J. Schwab. See his papers in the School Review in the series "The Practical," and especially "The Practical: Arts of Eclectic," School Review 79, No. 4 (August 1971):493-542.

4. David Hamilton, "Making Sense of Curriculum Evaluation: Continuities and Discontinuities in an Educational Idea," in Review of Research in Education, Vol. 5, Lee S. Shulman, editor (Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, 1977).

5. Hamilton, p. 313.

6. Hamilton, p. 328.

7. Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), Chapter 11. The quotation will be found in this chapter, p. 137.